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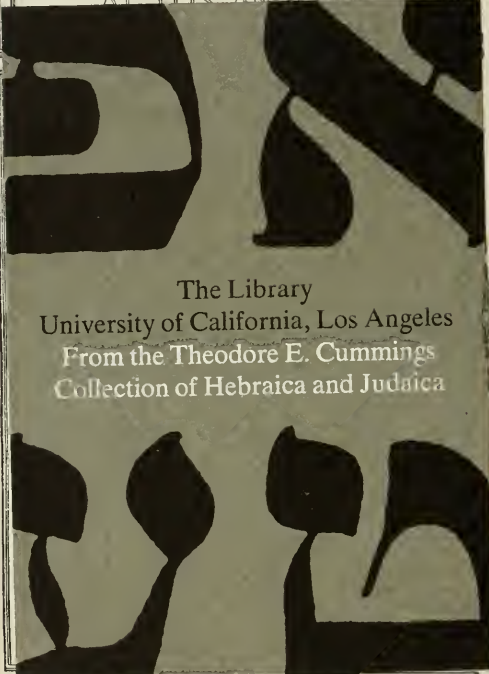
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In Memoriam. Rev. Dr. Ellen Cohn

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ROBERT ERNEST COWAN

In Memoriam.

Rev. Dr. Elkan Cohn.

Born February 22d, 1820.

Died March 11th, 1889.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA
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NOTE INTRODUCTORY.

Believing that the members of the Congregation Emanuel, and the numerous friends of the late Rev. Dr. Cohn would like to preserve a souvenir of the departed, I have prepared the addresses delivered upon the occasion of his funeral and the memorial service in his honor, for publication, and introduced them with an excellent likeness of my departed friend. It was intended that the remarks of the Rev. Dr. Stebbins should be a part of this memoir, but at a late hour I was compelled to go to press without them.

The following pages contain the reverent expressions of a man who loved Dr. Cohn as if he had been his father and preceptor. Dr. Elkan Cohn was one of the greatest of men, because he was one of the *purest*, and because of the lofty traits of character that distinguished him, he will live in our memory perhaps longer than those who in the days of stirring strife forgot that words of peace and love are stronger weapons than the shafts of abuse and malice. San Francisco and its Jewish community loved him; and our local history will ever know him as the man who did the most on this Coast towards elevating the standard of progressive Judaism. This is the sum of his history. May the earth rest softly on his ashes!

J. V.

Widmung.

גדולים צדיקים במיתתן יותר מבחייהן

Talmud Babli Sanhedrin.—

Das Leben eines Mann's von echtem Adel,
Erhaben über beide, Lob und Tadel,
Das wollen diese Blätter ehrlich schildern;
Sie sollen Nichts vergrößern und Nichts mildern.

So wahr wie er im Leben ist gewesen,
So wahr im Tode sollt ihr von ihm lesen;
Dann ruft auch ihr in trauervollem Tone:
"Ein Edelstein fiel aus Jisraels Krone!"

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EULOGY

DELIVERED OVER THE REMAINS OF THE

Rev. Dr. Elkan Cohn,

On March 14th, 1889.

— BY —

REV. DR. JACOB VOORSANGER.

2 KINGS, II, Verse, 3. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth unto Elisha and said unto him, "Knowest thou that to-day the Lord will take away thy master from thy head?" And he said, "I also know it; be still."

Verses 11-12. And it came to pass as they went on, speaking as they were going, that, behold, there came a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a storm-wind to heaven; and Elisha saw it, and he cried, "My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and their horsemen." And he saw him no more.

Friends, we meet to-day in the gloom and o'erhanging pall of death. We are bereft, orphaned. Our venerable teacher, the object of our love and reverence, has answered the summons of eternity. His gain is the peace eternal of God our father; our loss is himself, his learning, his character, his virtues. Every heart feels best to-day what it has lost. The congregation of Israel is in mourning. Far and wide the message has gone forth that Emanuel has lost its father, its teacher, its pure-hearted, gentle old rabbi, and let us say to the world that it knows not the tenth part of our loss. And my own lips would also be dumb to-day, and I would fain sit with you in silence, in the silence of sorrow and mourning, for my heart weeps for him, and my words can give no adequate expression to the sentiments that fill my breast. For I am left alone to teach you and to speak to you. Left alone, without that cheering, venerable presence, that handsome old man, whose looks were expressive of wisdom, whose smile of approval

was mental nourishment to me, whose pure life and exalted character were the finest examples I have had during all the years of my life. All that he was to you, to me, to his family and his friends,—what language but tears of sorrow could express it to-day?

And yet must I speak; we will not carry him to the home we have prepared for him without the tenderest adieux. If his life was one long lesson, that taught the house of Israel the noblest conception of duty, his death likewise shall teach us many lessons. We are taught that the righteous never die. Disintegration affects the dust only. His soul, in its upward flight, relieved of the shackles that sometimes were painful to it, has left sparks of its divine character with us, and we pray God that our dear teacher may have left a double portion of his spirit behind him. Some other time, when those who are doubly bereft, his dear children, shall be better prepared to listen; when the poignancy of our own grief shall somewhat have passed away, we will meet again in these sombre halls, which are draped in the emblems of our mourning, and before all the world we will give testimony of our great love and reverence, and in accord with the usage of our fathers, pay a fitting tribute to his noble life, and the great works he has wrought. To-day let us give vent to our sorrow, the expression of grieved hearts; but let us not part without permitting some divine ray of consolation to illumine our dark surroundings, and casting our eyes heavenward, invoke the grace of God upon the living and the beloved dead.

That ancient tradition I just read to you hath a forceful lesson just now. Popular veneration of the great prophet, whose migration to celestial regions caused so much sorrow in the hearts of his disciples, easily transfigured his death into a mere departure to heaven. There is no mysticism in the loving, tender thought that our loved ones never die. Israel had no monument to bestow upon Elijah, except the noblest; it engrafted upon the memory of posterity the great fact, that, though his body had disap-

peared, his speech was no longer heard, his defiance no longer hurled at the irreligious and unrighteous, he was not dead. And he left disciples behind him, too; men, who, unworthy of wearing his mantle, prayed that they might continue his work and live and labor by his example. So hath oriental fashioning given us in quaint form one of the living facts of history, one of the factors of human endeavor, namely, that the work and the experience of good, brave men never die, but serve the double purpose of instructing humanity and causing the memory of the good to endure forever. In that deduction from the closing scenes of Elijah's life lies my trust and consolation, as, my beloved, it must be yours. Our own teacher, your faithful guide of thirty years, that modern Elijah, who raised the standard of our sacred faith high toward the skies, whose brilliant qualities distinguished him among his fellows, the leader and teacher of his professional brethren, the true gentleman, the pious, venerable patriarch whose gentle eye never cast an angry ray upon a loved child or friend, whose white hairs were a crown of glory adorning a head that never harbored an impure, unholy thought; friends, the whirlwind that men call Death has taken him up, and like Elisha by the border of Jordan and the disciples further off, we stand here, piercing the sky with strained eyes and persuading ourselves that, though the earth must have his body, he is indeed, not dead, no, not dead; and I am come to teach you why he shall continue to live in our hearts.

The world hath many failings. It hath the imperfection natural to all dust; oftentimes its memory fails when the deeds and accomplishments of the past are to be reviewed. Every generation gives a shout of triumph at its own success, and in the hour of successful accomplishment ungrateful comparisons are made. But the world is not altogether oblivious of its obligations to the past. Its memory is stunted sometimes, but rarely fails altogether. God, who gives peace eternal to our righteous and our good, gives them likewise a place in our memory. In the hours of tender

remembrance the dead arise, and the great army of them place at our feet the blessings of many generations. When memory is active, human speech is eloquent to proclaim, to loudly proclaim the noble deeds the present inherits from the past, and as the sun leaps forth at the break of day to shed light on silent earth, on resting, sleeping men, so come these deeds to warm our silent hearts into newer and greater love for the dead. And in the present instance let us determine that his name shall live amongst us; let us speak tender, loving words of him to our little ones; describe the beauty of his soul, the holiness of his life; describe the man whose whole career was a grand offering to the God of his fathers, who ministered at the altar in truth, in simple-hearted faith, in the purest intentions that ever pervaded human breast. You will doubtless speak in after days of his great learning, that he was one of the modern scribes, deeply versed in the law; that the Talmud was an open book to him; that he spoke many languages, and had exhausted the well-springs of knowledge. But tell your children likewise that, great scholar as he was, he was a greater man; that his heart was as pure as his mind was lofty, and that deeply as we admired his learning we yet loved him better for his character, which, of God's own making, made Dr. Elkan Cohn one of the truest, noblest gentlemen that ever graced his generation. Tell these children that he himself esteemed his learning but as a means of accomplishing greater works than writing books. Tell them of to-day, when in this great city of San Francisco and in the congregations he served in his young manhood, there are men and women weeping and mourning for that by his death the hand of God rests heavily upon them. The great number that as children felt his dear hands rest upon them in blessing, the great number who as happy couples stood before him to hear him tell of the noble mission of men and women when united in marriage, the happy throng of children to whom his venerable presence was an inspiration—they will all remember him and love him until their eyes also close in death,—and could

the procession but find room, you would witness a spectacle to-day that would create a lasting impression upon you. You would see throngs of men crying that their benefactor is dead. You would hear testimony that this modest man, this retiring scholar eased and solaced the pain of hundreds, gave them of his substance, spoke words of the tenderest love to them, healed the wounds in their hearts by the balm of his great affection for humanity, was a father to orphans who almost idolized him, was a counselor to widows who blessed God that Dr. Elkan Cohn was living to aid them in their terrible straits. And you would also hear testimony that this man stood between factions and created peace by the pure force of example. Ask those who knew him to be an ardent, consistent reformer — those who differ with me and differed with him — ask them for the merits of this man. And they will give testimony that he was pure; that no truer servant of God ever stepped the soil of this land; that all differences of opinion were forgotten when his virtues were considered; that he never, never held man accountable for an opposite opinion, but looked upon Jew and Christian alike as the children of a good God, whose servant he was, and whose service demanded the exercise of loving kindness to all men. With him — though he was a Jew to the core of his heart — creeds were but means to accomplish noble deeds, and he esteemed them all alike as the instruments of Deity to effect the moral education of mankind.

And fail not, my brethren, to tell your children that Dr. Elkan Cohn was a patriot, an ardent believer in the holiness of the American Constitution, a faithful, self-sacrificing citizen, whose lofty conception of duty and obedience to law gave utterance in days of fateful strife between brethren to words that helped to save. Teach them also, friends, your knowledge of our departed friend's virtues. He never spoke but for the good of his fellow-men. He never thought but to bless and to do good. He never harbored an impure sentiment. He never gave willing offense to a soul on

God's earth. He never breathed an offensive word against his neighbor. When he was offended he was silent and grieved in his heart, yet too noble to repay evil, and those among you who knew him longer than I did will surely bear me witness that I have spoken the whole truth. For all of this, my brethren, his loss to us is so great that we shall only be able to estimate it when Sabbath after Sabbath his chair shall remain vacant, when the poor shall come and cry that they miss him, when I and others, who turned to him for guidance, shall look in vain and find none other to take his place in the same degree. But he shall live amongst us, shall he not? Such men as our departed Rabbi do not die "and they that bring many to righteousness shall be like the stars and shine forever and ever."

A question that remains to be answered now is: "What shall we do without this good shepherd, whose noble example created so much happiness, whose wisdom spread so much intelligence?" That also, brethren, shall be answered by the mercy of God. Speaking for my noble friend and in his name, I say to you: Brethren, we are orphaned but not forsaken. We have still his life to guide us, and we have God to aid and strengthen us. Two years ago, when he could still speak to us in unimpaired vigor, I heard him preach a sermon, some sentences of which I will never forget. "Time flies," he said, "but hope remains." "Life departs," he said then, "but love never dies." "God takes every generation in due time," said he, "but God deprives no one of the message of His love." With such noble teachings, which I bring you as his last message, shall we despair that the future is a blank? No, no, he was the last to be discouraged when calamity stalked abroad. He had faith in God, he loved man, and gentle as you knew him, there rested in him an indomitable spirit that never drooped, never despaired, never doubted the eternal watchfulness of God's providence. In that Providence, brethren, let us put our trust in the hour of our sorrow. In Dr. Elkan Cohn's name,

I charge you, brethren, close ranks ! Brethren, no halt in God's work, no cessation in loving deeds. He loved you, and he loved Emanuel with every fibre of his great soul, and could he speak now, he would charge you to go onward, to take the standard from his hands and raise it still higher, still higher for the honor of God's name and the happiness of humanity. Brethren, in honor to his memory, in faithful remembrance of his distinguished services, let us determine to remain true and faithful to our mission to promote the happiness of mankind, to serve God with heart and soul, and to do those deeds of loving kindness which he loved to do, as much the impulse of his true heart as in obedience to his high principles. Then, though he be gone from us, he will bless us, even as though his priestly hands were uplifted over us to give us the benediction that came from his inmost heart.

And now, brethren, my most painful task has come. I must say adieu for him — a loving, tender farewell from him to you, from you to him. From him to these sacred precincts in which he taught so long and so well; from him to this sanctuary he consecrated with benisons to the God of Israel; from him to you, who were the holiest care of his life, and to your children, whom he loved as his own; from him to the son and daughters, whom he adored and into whom he strove to breathe his own spirit of loving kindness; from him to you, Messrs. President and Vice-President and brethren of the Board, whom he faithfully seconded in every noble endeavor to promote the welfare of our beloved congregation; from him to the many poor and distressed whom he took as charges from his Father in heaven; from him to all of you, men and women of all classes and conditions, the last farewell of a noble and upright teacher in Israel. And adieu to thee, our departed teacher, from all those who loved thee well. Adieu, thou son of a race of teachers, scion of a noble family. Adieu, thou good, true man, thou loving friend, thou wise master. Adieu, and the peace of God go with thee. Yonder, where our hands shall

plant flowers in affectionate remembrance of thee, yonder we will bend our steps, and on thy eternal resting place we shall pray that thy noble soul may find eternal peace in the arms of God. Blessed was thy coming in, blessed be thy going out. May the beauty of the Lord thy God be upon thee and His glory encompass thee. We shall not forget thee. To us thou hast left a precious inheritance, and it shall inspire us to follow in thy footsteps. And may God strengthen us in this bitter hour, and teach us so to live that the beatified spirit of the departed sage shall bless us, and our own happiness be the reward of pure lives and noble efforts. May the Eternal our God be with us as he has been with our fathers. May he not abandon nor forsake us. Amen.

LETTER OF CONDOLENCE

ADDRESSED BY THE

Trustees of the First Unitarian Church,

OF SAN FRANCISCO, TO THE

Board of Directors of Temple Emanu-El,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEMISE OF

REV. DR. ELKAN COHN.

*The Trustees of the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco
to the Presidency of Congregation Emanu-El:*

BRETHREN—In our own name, and in the name of our Church, we offer you and your people our sincere regards, and unite with you in common sentiments of respectful and tender sorrow at the death of your beloved and revered Rabbi, the late Dr. Elkan Cohn. He was the teacher and friend of your people, and the dignity and purity of his character made him beloved by all. We have special reason to recognize and feel his wise magnanimity, his liberal judgment and high sense of duty. Allow us, brethren, to unite with you in these sentiments, and while we accept trustfully the will of heaven, to commit him, and ourselves, and our people to God as to a faithful Creator.

Very sincerely,

CHAS. M. GORHAM,

SHELDON G. KELLOGG,

Moderator of the Board.

Clerk.

Resolved, That the foregoing letter be sent to the Presidency of Congregation Emanu-El.

The above resolution was adopted by the Board March 26, 1889.

SHELDON G. KELLOGG,

Clerk Board of Trustees First Unitarian Society.

"Say ye of the Righteous that he hath done well."

A SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE

Memorial Service

HELD IN HONOR OF THE LATE

REV. DR. ELKAN COHN,

On Sunday, April 7th, 1889.

By REV. DR. JACOB VOORSANGER.

TEXT—Isaiah III:10. "Say ye unto the righteous, that he hath done well; and from the fruits of their doings shall they eat."

It is now nearly thirty days since we have deposited the remains of our beloved pastor in their eternal resting place. Needless to recall the sad event to your minds; our synagogue is still decked in the somber garb of mourning. Still everything around us reminds us of our loss; his absence from our midst as we gather here Sabbath after Sabbath to offer up our devotions, has converted every service into a memorial of the dear departed. His vacant chair, adorned by tender hands with the flowers he best loved, is the mute witness of our regrets, and we can scarcely reconcile ourselves to the stern reality that his gentle voice; ever charged with wise counsel, shall nevermore be heard amongst us. To-day we meet again to honor his memory. A custom, begotten by deepest reverence, warrants the public meeting of Israel within thirty days after the passing away of one of its sages to give public testimony of his works and his worth, and to impress upon the minds of the living the beautiful examples set by the ever-remembered dead. This labor of love, this task of reverence is ours to-day. Let us, then, pause for a brief while to commune together. Thereafter the strife and struggle of life will commence anew, and we shall severally run our course, each ac-

according to the intelligence God has given him, to lay him down to rest when the word of command is spoken that never yet has been disobeyed.

Brethren, in unfolding the chapter of our beloved Rabbi's life before you, I experience a sense of reverence akin to the prophet's feeling when he was informed he stood on holy ground. The four decades that have preceded our time have witnessed struggles in the house of Israel that are inscribed on a separate page in our religious history. The air was rent with cries of war, the ground heaved under the violent movements of the combatants, but to us younger men the ground is holy. The battle was waged around the sanctuary, to preserve it in its purity, to keep its holy spirit from dying amongst men, to permit its continuance as the witness of God unto his people. The heroes are all dead or dying. One or two are left to enjoy the fruits of their labors and receive the measure of our reverence, and let us thank God that the great number of these valiant soldiers did not pass away without at least seeing the silver line of Jordan, and beyond it the certainty that they had not lived in vain. When to-day we mention the name of Dr. Elkan Cohn, we do not simply mention the name of Emanu - El's faithful pastor, but that of a man who in the spiritual struggles of the last forty years took a prominent part; who contributed a large share towards the wondrous up-building of Judaism in the United States; who braved contempt, despised danger, risked rank and fortune, and the good opinion of his brethren, in the attempt to liberate Judaism from the deathly stupor in which it had fallen. Years before his death he knew that the cause had succeeded; and, though his compeers were one after the other borne hence, having fought the good fight, he knew that the foundations of the regenerated Judaism being well set, no human hand could henceforth undermine it.

He was born on February 22—a memorable day—of the year 1820. The town of Kosten in Posen, where his parents lived, had

experienced little of the European upheaval of a few years before. All around, in the great cities of Europe, the downfall and exile of Napoleon had been succeeded by the re-establishment of old lines, which carried with them a recurrence of conservative thought in religious matters. The nascent Jewish reform party, which had been favored by the Napoleonic princes, despite the anathemas of the Rabbis, spoke with but a timid voice. Its early leaders were dead or indifferent, and Israel was in no present humor to give ear to liberal thought. Everywhere Rabbinism had obtained a stronger hold, its resentment against the religious anarchists who dared preach a reconciliation between the spirit of Judaism and the spirit of modern times was deep and bitter. No wonder, then, that Elkan Cohn was born in orthodox surroundings. His father was a learned and intelligent man, who, on account of the early death of his wife, was compelled to send his son to Shempin, where his grandparents lived. In the latter village the child was raised in an atmosphere purely Talmudical. Traveling Rabbis were the guests of his relatives; learned discussions were the topics at family meals; morning and evening the hum of dialectics, the monotone of controversy and exposition resounded in his ears. In these surroundings Elkan Cohn imbibed that great desire for knowledge that clung to him through life. When he left his grandparents' house at the age of fourteen to begin his studies, he was already well equipped in Talmudical lore. An eager, receptive mind was his — endowed by nature with the remarkable faculty of not alone grasping the salient points of knowledge, but of retaining them to be used as the material for future structures of wisdom. I do not know whether in the home circle he was permitted to enrich his mind with the elements of profane knowledge. But he had the making of a great scholar in him, and his wonderful application and incessant devotion to his tasks made him the favorite pupil of all his teachers. Remember that the men and generation of his class became scholars in profane knowledge, not by the consent or the com-

mand of their early teachers. The spirit of Israel's teachers, excepting a few, was then inimical to profane knowledge; versatility in the Talmudical codices, dialectic ability, learning in the complex Talmudical jurisprudence, were deemed the highest accomplishments. The greatest Talmudist was the greatest scholar. The Mendelssohnians—the men of progress, of whom Zunz was already a worthy representative—who stood then well-nigh alone, the others having fallen away, were deemed next to infidels. The generation of Rabbis who had publicly anathematized Mendelssohn's German translation of the Scriptures, was succeeded by men whose enmity was of no less degree. Few were then the Rabbis who sought to supplement their Talmudical accomplishments by a university career. These few, every one standing out as a hero amongst men, were the forerunners of our modern Judaism. They infused a desire for classical knowledge and for scientific attainments into the Talmud Bachurim, whom a consciousness to rise above their surroundings had driven to the German schools. Some of our leading American Rabbis, the greatest number of whom are now gathered to their fathers, belonged to that class.

Elkan Cohn, having passed some time in Breslau, was sent to Braunschweig, the cradle of poets and scholars, where he was exceptionally fortunate in the selection of his teachers. Amongst Dr. Cohn's papers there is a certificate in Dr. Herzfeld's handwriting, to the effect that the young student had been for three years a pupil of Rabbi Isaac Eger, a son of the great Rabbi Akiba Eger, and that after the death of that scholarly Talmudist, the famous historian himself had instructed him. The name of Herzfeld suggests the ripest knowledge, the finest historical acumen, the most versatile talents, and from him, whose history of the Jews is still a text-book among students, Elkan Cohn imbibed that scholarly faculty of industrious, painstaking research, which enabled him to master difficult problems of learning, and

did not leave him until his growing infirmities robbed him of the pleasure of patient study. Meanwhile he attended the gymnasium, where he received a thorough modern education. At the age of twenty, Herzfeld sent him to Berlin with letters of loving regard to the spiritual authorities and influential Jewish laymen, and then, in that great center of learning, he slowly developed those remarkable faculties which were destined, under the protection of Heaven, to become a blessing to the Jews of the far West. He matriculated as a student of the humaniora at the University of Berlin, and pursued his theological and Rabbinical studies under the famous J. J. Ettinger, then chief Rabbi of the Berlin community. His ten years' residence in Berlin form a tale of patient toil, often diverted by intercourse with learned and polite society. In no haste to seek a professional position, he maintained himself, independently of the world, as a private tutor, and was enabled, as seems always to have been his fondest desire, to pursue science for its own dear sake, giving but a fleeting thought to the responsibilities he would be called upon in future to assume. The university made him a scholar; his intercourse with Zunz and the growing number of progressive scholars opened his eyes to the demands of the times. Israel wished to break its fetters; the young particularly had grown weary of Rabbinical domination. In them the embers of a purer faith were being fanned until they grew into bright flames; and they had learned already that the sum of all knowledge was not contained in the Talmud, its codices and commentaries. They had a precious bequeathment of the generation preceding them, namely, the great thought that Israel's political freedom could not be accomplished in the midst of mental stupor; that to wrench enfranchisement and manhood from the nations would be impossible if Israel persisted in enveloping itself in its oriental frame. That thought, spoken first in whispers, grew to an angry demand when Elkan Cohn was a student, and those who found the German Jews indifferent to spiritual regeneration had already crossed

the seas to dedicate new shrines to the God of Israel on the virgin soil of free America. Our friend was one of those young men, whose pursuit of literature and intercourse with refined minds had rendered them forever incapable of a career circumscribed on all sides by Rabbinical restrictions. But his time had not yet come. He plodded patiently, diverting himself by writing beautiful Hebrew poetry, copying the Syriac version of the Pentateuch, or composing Greek and Latin verse.* He remained long enough in Berlin to witness the exciting scenes of the revolution of '48, and, being a member of the students' corps, the peaceful devotee of science became a soldier for the nonce, and did good service in defense of the national property. In Berlin also the romance of his life was enacted. In one of the families he attended in the capacity of tutor he met the lady whom most of you have known and esteemed, who was herself patiently moulding young minds given in her care. Her beauty, her gentleness and sweet demeanor, no less than her charming gifts of mind, attracted the student, and between these two there sprung up an attachment that ripened into a love true and tender and all-absorbing, and they agreed that God had created them for each other. When he left Berlin in 1850, having become Rabbi of Brandenburg, he brought his young wife with him, and she ever remained the proudest and most cherished treasure of the gentle scholar, who but for that dear companion by his side might have found some difficulty in braving the risks of his period. For he was essentially a man of peace. God had created him with a gentle nature, a temperament the reverse of aggressive, and though he was the peer of any scholar in the land, he might have remained content with a pittance and his beloved books, but for that pure wifely ambition that led the noble young sage into more worldly paths for the happiness of those who had already begun to admire the depth of both his learning and his character. Four years he re-

*Several very interesting poems and a fragment of the manuscript above alluded to, I have found among Dr. Cohn's papers.—J. V.

mained in Brandenburg. Then the world unfolded to his gaze, and he was summoned to do manly toil.

In America men were needed. The nascent congregations of Israel clamored for the teachers in whom the fire of faith had become intensified by research and study. A few were on the premises already, men who had come of their own choice. To give you a picture of Judaism in America in 1854, the year of Dr. Cohn's arrival, would require more time than may be utilized at present. The distant thunder of revolution was being heard. The broad spirit of the land created in the hearts of the Jews irreconcilable objections to petrified traditions. Everywhere callousness, indifference, lack of spiritual fervor were the result of imperfect organization, half-educated preachers, and an orthodoxy of form, an empty shell, beneath which the substance of faith had disappeared. The congregations suffered from the want of preachers. The number of educated men of that class was surprisingly few. The cause of reform had just been stirred, and the attempts to hush the timid voices were many. Already in 1832 a Jewish layman of Charleston, Isaac Harby, had pleaded with his congregation for an intelligent, modernized presentation of Jewish religious forms. For a long time his voice remained unheard, outside of his own congregation; then in the north one voice after the other gave forth sound. The battle was soon to commence. Our revered friend, quietly ministering to his Brandenburg congregation, received a call from the Jewish community of Albany, N. Y., to cross the ocean and become their spiritual guide. Without any thought of the agitation in which he was to take so prominent a part, simply conscious that his talents would be useful to his coreligionists in the New World, Dr. Elkan Cohn, at the age of thirty-four, in the closing months of the year 1854, took his wife and child, and committing himself to the mercy of Heaven, withstood the perils of the sea to found for himself an American home.

He arrived in Albany in the closing month of the year, was received with the honors due his exalted station, and instantly went to work. In New York a few choice spirits had welcomed him—men who knew the solid mettle of the new-comer. Lilienthal, whom a grateful posterity has named the “Prince of Peace,” was the principal of an academy, Merzbacher was preaching to the Emauu-El congregation, Raphall was preacher of the B’nai Jesumn, and the lamented Isaacs was in the midst of his career of blessed usefulness. Wise, Dr. Cohn’s predecessor in Albany—a fiery, warlike spirit, whose perennial strength seems to withstand the times—had gone to Cincinnati; Gutheim had departed for New Orleans; Einhorn and Adler had not yet come, but they were in time for the battle. The outposts were being filled, the sentinels properly stationed, and the notes of war were rumbling like distant thunder in the angry sky. The *casus belli* is historical. When the forces separated the gage lying between them was the Ark of the Covenant. The one side coveted the ark, the other its contents. That is the simplest presentation of the case. We render our opponents the justice that they sought on their side to cultivate the spirit of Judaism, and felt that they could do so by perpetuating the traditional envelopments of that spirit. Whether they succeeded or not I need not answer. Forty years of history have given answer. Dr. Wise during his ministrations in Albany had been the means of throwing the congregation into a ferment. He had spoken with no doubtful voice; he demanded changes which, denounced at the time in the bitterest, most abusive language, have since been adopted by nearly every congregation in the land. In New York, Merzbacher had launched his new abridged prayer-book with much fear and timidity. The time for open discussion had come. What meant these turbulent reformers, these half-infidels, violators of the traditional law, who openly disregarded many of the traditional customs? Their answer never was equivocal. They demanded the upbuilding of the spirit of Judaism, the elevation of Jewish

manhood, the abrogation of spiritless devotional compositions; and the great underlying factor of their movement was the harmonizing of Jewish religious ideas with the spirit of the times. Nine reform congregations existed in 1854. To-day we have two hundred. These nine with their leaders stood the brunt of battle and not for a moment wavered, nor was their crest lowered on the day of war. Jewish organs fulminated against them in Pope-like bulls; they were denounced as enemies of Judaism; of some it was said they were self-called preachers. A temporary truce was called a year later. In 1855 an attempt was made to harmonize the differences between the parties, and had these differences been as to the form only, the reform party of the United States would have died in its infancy. A convention of Rabbis and delegates was called at Cleveland in 1855. The call set forth grandiloquently the great things that were expected. Peace was to reign supreme, asylums to be established, colleges to be endowed; in brief, the sanguine hopes of these young men gave a rosy color to the attempt. When the convention met the newcomer was honored as befitted his station. Wise was president; Lilienthal, secretary; Elkan Cohn was vice-president and chairman of the committee on text and prayer-books. The results of that convention may be summed up in the fact that after its adjournment the delegates were more than ever convinced of the futility of a compromise. And in the course of a few years, when the reform cause prospered by accession to its ranks, it was readily seen how impossibly the few real reformers could harmonize with the advocates of the *status quo*. When Einhorn of honored memory began to thunder against half-reform, against the pomp and tinsel and glitter of a compromise worship, Dr. Elkan Cohn readily came to his side, and thereafter his history in the East was closed. He was no Titan, no world-stormer, simply a peaceful citizen, who could accomplish his sacred objects by teaching, and he loathed from his soul the bitter words that were spoken on both sides.

In the month of January, 1860, the Board of Trustees of the Emanu-El Congregation of San Francisco, Henry Seligman then being president, elected Dr. Elkan Cohn their Rabbi and minister for three years. In the fall of that year, in time for the solemn festivals, he arrived and was installed. He came, after a struggle with himself. Six years of devoted service had endeared him to his Albany congregation. Another child had been born to him, and his surroundings were thoroughly congenial. He was aware of the future that awaited him, knew that all the scholarly attainments acquired by years of painstaking labor would not be valued as highly as the faculty to organize schools and to build up the rather lukewarm spirit of the West. He felt that he would be a pioneer minister, and realized the difficulties of that position. If he hesitated for a moment before he came, you who knew him can testify that he never wavered in his devotion to his work after he arrived. Numbers who welcomed him to San Francisco are here to-day within the reach of my voice; they can do him better justice than the young who inherit the fruits of their parents' toil. Those who have seen him wend his way to the old Broadway Synagogue, those who were with him when he descended from the chair of an academician to become the teacher of little children, do him the justice that no man of his tastes and inclinations ever made greater sacrifices than he did; and he was well rewarded. No man was more admired, no man enjoyed the love of his flock in such a degree. And when in his elegant German discourses he began to plead the cause of reform, he found a congregation ripe for the change and willing to follow. He was no half-hearted reformer. Whatever savored of unreason, whatever was retrogressive, whatever partook of the nature of the insensate was abhorrent to his soul. To educate his people to a pure, reasoning worship of God—a worship clad in forms harmonious—was one of the main objects of his mission. In our local history he therefore occupies the place that Einhorn, Lilienthal, Wise and others occupied in their respective spheres.

If his language was less bitter than that of some of his colleagues in the East, his cause lost not an iota by it. Sabbath after Sabbath he attacked the rust of centuries, grew eloquent when pointing out the needs of timely changes, and the objects to be accomplished thereby. In the stately temple his congregation meant to erect for him, not a sound of disharmony should be heard, and the worshipers should be weaned from the unreasonable features of traditional thought and worship. But, thoroughgoing radical as he was in these respects, he shared with Einhorn and Lilienthal the beautiful distinction that no purer men, no better Jews, no greater lovers of their people, no more pious worshipers of the God of their fathers ever trod the soil of America. Dr. Cohn's reverence was the result of an abiding faith in God; his reforms were no mere policy, no mere catering to a more or less modern taste. They were the results of an anxious, prayerful inquiry how to render the greatest honor to the God he reverently worshiped. Many misunderstood him; many opposed him. He made enemies for truth's sake, but, gentle soul that he was, he never yielded an inch in the service of his cause. Only recently, shortly before his fatal illness overtook him, he spoke again with some degree of impatience of the men who, just when the congregation assumed a heavy financial debt to enable them to build the new sanctuary, left the ranks and founded a new congregation, ostensibly upon principles diametrically opposed to his own—principles they never kept, for, with but trifling differences, their present worship and doctrines of religion are the same as ours. How his heart swelled with pleasurable emotion when for the first time he performed his priestly functions in this house! How his soul sung pæans of praise, that at last the cause had been permanently established! Since then twenty-two years have come and gone, and say now of him that he faithfully ministered unto you, never yielding when he was right, always forgiving when he was assailed. Not one among you who has not at some time received his ministrations, for he was a priestly

Rabbi, who came to your households to give you peace. Thus he pursued his career and passed his life in the far West—preaching, teaching, ministering; arousing every noble impulse in his flock; fostering every charitable sentiment; assisting in the foundation and endowment of our public charitable institutions; setting an example every day of his life—the example of a singularly devoted husband, a loving father, a religious man, a public-spirited citizen, and a benefactor of his kind in speech, thought and action. Every impulse of his noble soul, every thought of his rich mind was consecrated to God, to religion, to humanity, and in the domain of charitable action his spirited example created noble philanthropists among the young Hebrews of the West. You will not, I am sure, contradict me when I aver that, much as the Emanu-El Congregation of San Francisco—to-day the most liberal and most intelligent congregation of the West—owes to its public-spirited laymen, to its devoted presidents and officers, its standing is in a large measure owing to the twenty-nine years services of Dr. Elkan Cohn.

And now that his last page is turned, now that the elegies have been sung, and the hoary head has been laid to rest on its eternal pillow, let us say of him with deep reverence: **אמרו צדיק כי טוב** "Tell ye of the righteous that it was good." Well done—well done, good and faithful servant! What need to recount the long list of his services to his generation, the singular devotion that characterized his every action? What need to name the beautiful deeds of each year, the wise teachings of every period? Give him one page in your history, men of San Francisco; inscribe on that page simply his name—the honored, revered name of Dr. Elkan Cohn—and the name will stand for all that is beautiful in life, all that is lofty in character, all that constitutes the true man, the faithful shepherd, the noble scholar.

And thus let us part with him, reserving loving thoughts for his dear memory in our hearts. In a few days these emblems of

mourning will be removed and our synagogue will resume its wonted appearance, for it is not meet to lament forever. But look to it, brethren, that with the emblems that so sadly suggest his departure, his spirit doth not depart from you. Look to it, that he who gave you the best part of his life, whose ambition centered in your spiritual well-being — look to it, brethren, that his memory be not offended by any retrogressive act on your part. He leaves you a precious legacy; keep it well. Continue his work, labor in his spirit, promote every noble cause as he did, and thus shall ye be blessed of God and men, and your works shall be the noblest monuments erected to the memory of the gentle shepherd, whose spirit, in the realms of eternity, will be happy because of your happiness. Consecrate this temple anew to a pure service, to a living faith, to noble acts, and consecrate your lives by the pure light of the teachings that shall not cease their voice in these halls, and then his labors shall not have been in vain, and the faithful work of his hands shall come back to us, to abide with us, and to bless the future of our children.

From his grave in our home of peace, where he sleeps beside his faithful wife — these two who loved and were true in life are not separated in death — there comes to us the odor of sweet flowers, planted by loving hands in tender memory of the father, the teacher, the friend. And every gently-freighted breeze so coming from the southland brings to us a message from the dear departed — a message of peace, of love, of truth. And to the west from his grave, beyond the sloping hills and the flower-clad landscapes, there is the silver line of the sea, kissing the shore of the land he loved with a mighty love. You have often watched how that silver line recedes and advances? It is an emblem of the eternal continuance of God's Providence. It brings a daily message to toiling, struggling, suffering man, that overlooking the world with care infinite is God, who giveth life and watch-

eth the birth of centuries and generations. To Him, then, who giveth His beloved sleep, to Him we entrust the soul of our gentle, loving Rabbi, and pray that the rich reward of a nobly spent life may be his. And as with the recurrence of the seasons, the earth dons its smiling garments, breathing the hope of eternal life into the hearts of men, so let us hope, then, brethren, and pray with might that immortality doth crown the life we have mourned for, and the sweet repose of the righteous is vouchsafed unto him. Amen.

And now let us rise together once more and in honor of his memory recite the customary benediction.

RESOLUTIONS

PASSED BY THE

Board of Trustees of Temple Emanu-El

RESPECTING THE DEMISE OF THE

REV. DR. ELKAN COHN.

“The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken; Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Our worthy and revered minister, our noble teacher, our most excellent friend, the Reverend Dr. Elkan Cohn, has yielded up his spirit and has been taken to his final resting place. God in his wisdom has decreed to call him from his labors in our midst, and we bow to the eternal will.

But whilst, in the spirit of our faith, rendering this homage to the Judge of the spirit of all flesh, we must give expression to the grief felt not only among the members of this Board, nor solely in the Congregation to which he ministered for three decades, but throughout the entire community, irrespective of creed. These general manifestations of sorrow are more eloquent than words, and emphasize the leading position he held in this community by his learning, his nobility and uprightness of character. Let his example and precepts be a beacon-light to us and our children, to guide us in the path to which he loved to direct our footsteps, and let our action be a vindication of the great truths he delighted to unfold to us.

Thus shall we raise him a monument more enduring than stone, and keep his memory alive for future generations.

Resolved, That as a token of respect to the memory of our noble deceased teacher, it is hereby ordered :

1. That the Synagogue in which he so faithfully ministered before the Lord be draped in the emblems of mourning for thirty days.

2. That a public memorial service in honor of his memory be held on Sunday, April 7th, 1889, at 2 o'clock P. M.

3. That a memorial tablet be built into the wall of the vestibule leading to the sanctuary, on which his name, suitably engraved, shall tell all who come to worship of the distinguished services rendered by Dr. Elkan Cohn to his Congregation.

Resolved, That we condole with his family in their great bereavement, and offer our sympathy for their great loss.

Resolved, That a copy of these Resolutions be sent to the family, and also be spread upon the minutes of the Board.

Signed,

M. HELLER, *President*,

A. ANSPACHER, *Vice-President*,

E. LEVY, *Secretary*.

P. N. LILIENTHAL,

J. GREENEBAUM,

S. ROSENER,

Committee.

RESOLUTIONS OF REGRET

PASSED BY THE

Board of Education of Congregation Emanu-El

ON THE OCCASION OF THE PASSING AWAY OF THE

REV. DR. ELKAN COHN.

SAN FRANCISCO, March 15, 1889.

The Board of Education of Temple Emanu-El desires, in common with other bodies and organizations, to place on record its great esteem of the memory of the Rev. Dr. Elkan Cohn, and its sorrow at his untimely departure from the field of human action.

Dr. Cohn assumed charge of our Religious School upon his arrival in San Francisco in 1860, and gave the institution the benefit of unremitting care and sagacious counsel. His great learning and his experience as a practical educator were applied to the reorganization of the school, and, during his long career, a generation of pious and God-fearing Israelites passed from the class-room and from under his loving eye into the world. All of these ex-pupils of Dr. Elkan Cohn, many of whom are now honored members of Temple Emanu-El and occupy stations of trust in society, look back with gratitude to the time when their revered teacher prepared their spirits for contact with the world, and taught them the wise words of religion applied to daily action. And their children also, those at present in our care, mourn for the venerable Rabbi, whose lofty ambitions included a generous pride in the successes of the school, and an earnest de-

sire to associate its name with the high precepts of a pure and progressive Judaism.

Resolved, That by the death of Rev. Dr. Elkan Cohn, formerly Superintendent of the Religious School of Temple Emanu-El, that institution loses a benefactor whose name will be forever revered, and whose memory will be reverently honored.

Resolved, That a copy of these presents be spread on the minutes, and in an engrossed form, forwarded to the family of the departed Rabbi.

Signed,

L. L. DENNERY, *Chairman*,
P. LIPPITT, *Secretary*,
R. PEIXOTTO, *Treasurer*,
S. FUERTH,
M. WERTHEIMER,
H. ERLANGER,
S. GREENEBAUM,
I. W. GOLDMAN.

JACOB VOORSANGER,
Superintendent.

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